

**Socratic ENGAGEMENT: 10 Ways to Get the Class
Started -
Andragogically, of Course!**

By:

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"And the pilot - that is to say, the true pilot - is he a captain of sailors or a mere sailor?...Why do you ask such a question, I said, when you ought rather to be answering?" (*Republic*, Book 1).

Abstract - ENGAGEMENT is a plan; for sure, we all have our ideas on how to get on stage (center stage front) when it comes to "show time." This paper is a quasi tongue in cheek limited look at a few ways to "...create an educational program and setting in which adult students can develop their latent self-directed learning skills" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 92). Most of us need a plan to get on stage before we start a class. Having a plan is half the battle for engagement success. An andragogue/teacher/instructor/facilitator (ATIF) will look forward to lighting the fuse if he knows exactly how he is going to start the class.

ENGAGEMENT

GET on stage.
INTRODUCE with Power Point.
Use ANDRAGOGY
ASK a question.
You've only GOT three seconds!
Give a PRE-TEST.
Use the Socratic PARADIGM.
Give the PERFORMANCE objective.
Handout an OUTLINE.
TELL a story.

1. GET on stage - Walk in at precisely the starting time (students appreciate a punctual arrival and you know they are waiting for you to help stamp out aviation ignorance). My best start -- the one that gets the most attention -- is when I come in and stand on top of the desk to make my opening comments. I promise you they will not forget your first words - you won't have to say, "This will be on the test!" "Research indicates...students in classrooms, where teachers have positive self-concepts, tend to have students with high self-concepts" (AFMAN, 1994, p. 236).

2. INTRODUCE with Power Point - Hit 'em with some cleverly designed and colorful slides - don't forget to use all the bells

and whistles - and use an ample amount of *laser text, machine guns, and ta-das*. "Adding visuals to a presentation can reduce the time required to grasp a concept by up to 40 percent" (Currid, 1995, p. 4). Course, you may have to use your own laptop to present your program, but *it does suggest that we promote and recommend the use of the computer in our training and teaching*.

3. Use ANDRAGOGY - No pedagogy in my class. Pedagogy is for kids. Tell your students right up front that you will be using andragogy and not pedagogy. Tell them that you expect them to learn at their own rate and you will provide "an atmosphere characterized by both mutual caring and support and intellectual rigor" (Knowles, 1975, p.

34). We facilitate the andragogical process by striving toward self-

direction. As Kidd has written, "the purpose of adult education...is to make the subject a continuing 'inner-directed,' self-operating learner" (1973, p. 47). *This also fills the "natural maturation" square for us andragogues* (Knowles, 1973, p. 54).

4. ASK a question - Start the class off with the question, "Let me ask you a question." Then apply APPLE:

A - ASK

P - PAUSE

P - PICK

L - LISTEN

E - EVALUATE

This is the beginning of "didactic dialogue." This is where facilitating begins. You must know your students and have knowledge of your subject to pull this off; however, you must find out where your students are before you can take them anywhere. This is what questioning will do. This is what probing will do. We must also remember as Wlodkowski (1985) suggests, "Always dignify the learner's response. The real fear for most adults in public responding is embarrassment" (p. 147). Socrates, as Morris (1966) says, "by virtue of the

planned sequence of queries...is sometimes alluded to as the father of all

programmed learning" (p. 136).

5. You've only GOT three seconds! - Your students will size you up in three seconds; indeed, they'll have your number. Lavington (1997) says, "It's not a comforting prospect to be judged so hastily, but that's the way it is" (p. 1). My best "three second impressions" are (1) wearing my camouflaged fighter pilot jacket to show that we sometimes have to do battle, and (2) throwing the checklist against the wall to show that you first have to solve the problem before you get into the books (This comes under the rubric of not letting the checklist do the thinking for you -- The checklist is to be used as a tool, not gospel). *This splendid opening helps explicate the term "FLY THE AIRPLANE!"*

6. PrE-test - A pre-test will show intentionality. It will surely set the pace. It shows you mean business and that you take your job seriously. Consider a two or three page questionnaire that includes a few short demographics to see where